

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Edward A. Garvey
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Chair
Commissioner
Commissioner
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Commissioner

In the Matter of a Relief Plan for the Exhaust of
the 612 Area Code

ISSUE DATE: November 25, 1997

DOCKET NO. P-999/M-97-506

ORDER DECLARING JEOPARDY STATUS
AND SETTING PROCEDURES FOR
ADDRESSING IMMEDIATE NUMBERING
ISSUES

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On November 13, 1997, the Commission issued its ORDER ESTABLISHING AREA CODE RELIEF PLAN, SETTING POLICIES FOR NUMBER CONSERVATION, AND ESTABLISHING TASK FORCE. In that Order, the Commission established a two-step geographic split relief plan to address the impending exhaust of central office codes in the (612) area code. Under the first phase of the relief plan, a new area code will be assigned to St. Paul and its suburbs, with use of that new code becoming mandatory in the week of January 1, 1999.¹ The Commission also set policies for the conservation of remaining codes and established a task force to address number pooling issues.

On November 10, 1997, Jack Ott, the US WEST Communications, Inc. Numbering Plan Administrator for Minnesota, filed a letter with the Commission. The Administrator stated that there are currently 47 unassigned central office codes remaining in the present (612) area. Since October 28, 1997, the Administrator has received 16 requests for code assignments. If those requests were honored, 31 codes would remain available to forestall number exhaust until area code relief is provided in the week of January 1, 1999. Under normal forecasted demands, 31 central office codes would provide slightly less than four months of growth.

The Administrator has therefore declared a temporary embargo on the assignment of (612) central office codes, including 14 of the 16 codes for which requests have been filed.²

In his letter, the Administrator asked the Commission to declare a jeopardy status in the (612) area code. Such a declaration would allow the Administrator to ration the remaining central office codes or to assign them on a first-come, first-served basis until none remain. The Administrator stated that, under either option, prefix exhaust could still develop in some (612) locations. The Administrator stated that he is ready to call a telecommunications industry meeting to reach

¹ The Commission has not yet set the exact date in that week.

² The Administrator assigned two central office codes to Winstar Telecommunications, Inc. to allow that company to begin providing service in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

consensus on a number allocation plan, should the Commission deem a meeting necessary. If this approach is used, the temporary embargo would remain in place until consensus is reached. As an alternative to the industry meeting, the Administrator could submit a proposed allocation plan for Commission approval. If the Commission does not choose either an industry-derived plan or the Administrator's proposed plan, the embargo will end on January 1, 1998, and the Administrator will assign the remaining codes on a first-come, first-served basis.

On November 18, 1997, the Administrator's letter and recommendations came before the Commission for consideration.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Commission is concerned by the dire prefix usage news conveyed in the Numbering Plan Administrator's letter, particularly in light of the fact that that news was not shared at the October 28, 1997 meeting in which the Commission reached its relief plan decision.

Clearly, the information the Numbering Plan Administrator has now given the Commission calls for an all-out effort by the Commission, the Department of Public Service, the Numbering Plan Administrator, and the industry to forestall prefix exhaust until the Commission's area code relief plan can be implemented. As the Department's representative stated at the November 18 meeting, the ultimate issue is that no customer should be denied a telephone number because central office codes are not available. In this Order, the Commission will initiate four measures to mobilize efforts to prevent such an occurrence.

First, the Commission declares a jeopardy status for the (612) area code. Declaration of this status enables the rationing and allocation of codes necessary to address the threat of an imminent prefix exhaust.

Second, the Commission directs the Numbering Plan Administrator to call an industry meeting, at the earliest possible date, to discuss the implementation of a lottery to assign the remaining available prefixes. By December 19, 1997, the industry group should submit to the Commission a report and recommendations regarding a lottery/allocation plan. The Numbering Plan Administrator should continue the embargo until the Commission has reached a decision and issued an Order implementing a lottery/allocation plan.

Third, the Commission states that any party seeking an emergency lift of the embargo should petition the Commission for the relief sought. The Commission makes this statement to clarify procedures as the Minnesota telecommunications industry deals with its first-ever central office code embargo.

Fourth, the Commission directs the Numbering Plan Administrator to provide, at the earliest opportunity, a comprehensive and accurate accounting of central office codes in the (612) area code. The Commission must have full and reliable information as it addresses the issues raised by the threat of prefix exhaust. The Commission must know the number of prefixes available, the number of prefixes reserved, the number of prefixes recoverable, the number of prefixes in use (with the concept of "in use" clearly defined), and any other information necessary to make reasoned judgments on code conservation, rationing, and allocation.

ORDER

1. The Commission declares a jeopardy status for the (612) area code.
2. The Commission directs the Numbering Plan Administrator to call an industry meeting, at the earliest possible date, to discuss the implementation of a lottery to assign the remaining available prefixes. By December 19, 1997, the industry group should submit to the Commission a report and recommendations regarding a lottery/allocation plan.
3. Any party seeking an emergency lift of the embargo should petition the Commission for the relief sought.
4. The Commission directs the Numbering Plan Administrator to provide, at the earliest opportunity, a comprehensive and accurate accounting of central office codes in the (612) area code.
5. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar
Executive Secretary

(S E A L)

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